

Message Text

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INFO DOD

OFFICE OF SECRETARY OF ARMY

COMUSCINCSO PANAMA

S E C R E T SANTIAGO 4383

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINS, MASS, CI

SUBJECT: CHILEAN DESIRE FOR TOW ANTI-TANK WEAPON

1. SUMMARY: PRESIDENT PINOCHET AND OTHER CHILEANS MAKE STRONG PITCH TO SECRETARY CALLAWAY FOR TOW ANTI-TANK WEAPON. WITHOUT MAKING ANY COMMITMENT, SECRETARY AGREES TO SEEK REEXAMINATION OF USG POSITION. EMBASSY AND MILGP URGE FAVORABLE RESPONSE. END SUMMARY.

2. AFTER JULY 23 DINNER FOR ARMY SECRETARY CALLAWAY, ATTENDED BY PRESIDENT PINOCHET (LAST OFFICIAL FUNCTION OF SECRETARY'S HIGHLY SUCCESSFUL VISIT), PRESIDENT ENGAGED IN LONG DISCUSSION WITH SECRETARY SUMMARIZING THEMES DEVELOPED BY CHILEAN HOSTS DURING HIS FOUR-DAY VISIT. EX-MINISTER OF DEFENSE ADM. CARVAJAL, CHIEFS OF NATIONAL DEFENSE AND ARMY GENERAL STAFFS, AND AMBASSADOR PARTICIPATED.

3. MATERIAL RELATING TO HUMAN RIGHTS AND DEMOCRATIC PRACTICES WAS ESSENTIALLY A REPLAY OF DISCUSSION PREVIOUSLY REPORTED, UPDATED AS RESULT OF SECRETARY'S CONVERSATIONS WITH GOC OFFICIALS AND ALSO WITH RANDOM SELECTION OF CHILEANS IN SANTIAGO'S CENTRAL MARKET.

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BELIEVE PINOCHET AND OTHER CHILEAN OFFICIALS ARE FULLY

AWARE OF OUR VIEWS REGARDING THESE MATTERS.

4. WHEN DISCUSSION TURNED TO ANXIETY OF CHILEANS REGARDING PROPECTS FOR SUPPLY OF MDOERN ARMS FROM US, IT BECAME CLEAR FROM REMARKS MADE BY GEN. PINOCHET AND ADM. CARVAJAL THAT OVERRIDING CONCERN OF CHILEANS AT MOMENT IS IN ANTI-TANK AREA. CHILEANS MADE POINT STRONGLY THAT UNLESS THEY CAN DO SOMETHING TO RIGHT THE EXTREME IMBALANCE IN TANK STRENGTH IN A YEAR OR SO, THEY WILL BE FACING A DESPARATE SITUATION. TOW WEAPON SEEMED TO CHILEANS THE ONLY ONE WITH SUFFICIENT RANGE AND STOPPING POWER TO BE OF APPRECIABLE USE TO THEM; LAW WAS TOO SHORT-RANGE.

5. SECRETARY CALLAWAY ACKNOWLEDGED IMBALNCE IN TANK FORCES AND RECOGNIZED CHILEANS WERE CONFRONTED WITH A VERY SERIOUS PROBLEM. ADVISED CHILEANS NOT TO UNDER-ESTIMATE LAW. USED BY THE INFANTRY PLATOONS AT SHORT RANGES, IT COULD BE HIGHLY EFFECTIVE, EVEN THOUGH SECRETARY AGREED THAT UNDER DESERT WARFARE CONDITIONS THIS FACTOR NOT AS IMPORTANT AS ELSEWHERE.

6. SECRETARY ADDED THAT HE CONSIDERED THE TOW FUNCTION (ANTI-TANK ACTION AT DISTANCE OF SAY 3,000 METERS) TO BE A VALID REQUIREMENT OF THE CHILEAN ARMY. HE NOTED THAT TOW HAD NOT YET BEEN MADE AVAILABLE TO ANY LATIN AMERICAN COUNTRY. HE EXPLAINED THAT WEAPONS DO NOT HAVE TO BE COMPLICATED IN USE IN ORDER TO BE CLASSIFIED AS SOPHISTICATED; SOMETIMES A WEAPON IS SOPHISTICATED PRECISELY BECAUSE IT IS SIMPLE TO OPERATE. IT WAS TRUE THAT THE TOW GUIDANCE SYSTEM WAS SIMPLE, BUT CONTENTS OF BLACK BOX ATTACHED WAS SOMETHING WE WOULD NOT WANT SOVIETS TO OBTAIN. IF WE FOLLOWED OUR POLICY OF EVENHANDEDNESS, AND MADE TOW AVAILABLE TO BOTH CHILE AND PERU, IT WOULD NOT BE LONG BEFORE SOVIET EXPERTS IN PERU HAD PICKED UP ALL THE INFORMATION THEY WANTED.

7. (IN THIS CONNECTION, IN AN EARLIER CONVERSATION, NEW DEFENSE MINISTER GEN. BONILLA SAID THAT WHEN HE HAD VISITED USSR WITH CINC UNDER ALLENDE, GEN. PRATS, SOVIET
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HOSTS HAD SHOWN THEM WEAPON SIMILAR TO TOW IN SOVIET ARSENAL. SAID IT WAS POSSIBLE PERUVIANS HAD ALREADY BEEN PROVIDED SUCH WEAPONS BY SOVIETS. SECRETARY SAID THE SOVIET WEAPON -- SAGGER -- WAS MUCH MORE DIFFICULT TO OPERATE THAN TOW.)

8. NEVERTHELESS, SECRETARY CALLAWAY CONTINUED, TOW IS CLEARLY A DEFENSIVE WEAPON, OF LITTLE USE OFFENSIVELY, AND ONE

WHICH WOULD HAVE A HELPFUL STABILIZING EFFECT IN CHILEAN TANKS, PARTICULARLY IF A TRUE BALANCE IN TANK FORCES WAS NOT POSSIBLE WITHIN THE NEXT FEW YEARS. AS A GENERAL APPROACH, THE UNITED STATES DESIRED TO CREATE CONDITIONS IN SOUTH AMERICA WHICH WOULD DISCOURAGE RESORT TO HOSTILITIES BY ANY POWER. FROM THIS STANDPOINT, SECRETARY COULD UNDERSTAND UTILITY OF TOW'S TO CHILE.

9. SECRETARY STRESSED TO PRESIDENT PINOCHET THAT NEITHER HE NOR THE DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY WAS IN A POSITION TO MAKE ANY DECISIONS OR COMMITMENTS WITH RESPECT TO TOW. BROAD POLITICAL AND MILITARY FACTORS WERE INVOLVED, WHICH REQUIRED VERY HIGH-LEVEL ACTION IN THE US GOVERNMENT. HOWEVER, SECRETARY SAID HE WOULD SEEK A REEXAMINATION OF THE PRESENT POSITION REGARDING THE TOW, ON HIS RETURN TO US. PRESIDENT AND OTHER CHILEANS PRESENT EXPRESSED UNDERSTANDING AND APPRECIATION.

10. ALTHOUGH THIS MESSAGE NOT SHOWN TO SECRETARY CALLAWAY BECAUSE OF HIS EARLY DEPARTURE JULY 24, SUBSTANCE WAS DISCUSSED WITH HIM.

11. COMMENT: ISSUE RAISED FOR USG BY CHILEAN PUSH FOR TOW IS WHETHER A POLICY OF EVENHANDEDNESS (AS BETWEEN CHILE AND PERU) SHOULD BE STRICTLY OBSERVED, EVEN THOUGH IT WILL TEND TO PRESERVE A PERUVIAN ADVANTAGE OF PERHAPS SEVEN-TO-ONE IN EFFECTIVENESS OF ARMORED FORCES. IF ARGUMENT IS MADE THAT EXACTLY THE SAME TYPES OF MATERIEL FURNISHED TO ONE COUNTRY MUST BE FURNISHED TO THE OTHER, CHILEANS WHO HAVE ALREADY SUFFERED BECAUSE THEY REFUSED OFFER OF SOVIET TANKS UNDER ALLENDE WHILE PERU ACCEPTED THEM, WILL SUFFER AGAIN BECAUSE OF HAZARD OF EXPOSING TOW TO COMPROMISE BY SOVIETS IN PERU.

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I STRONGLY ENDORSE SECRETARY CALLAWAY'S INTENTION TO REQUEST REEXAMINATION OF POSITION RE TOW. I BELIEVE ITS ACQUISITION BY CHILE WOULD BE A STABILIZING FACTOR. IT WOULD REDUCE BOTH TEMPTATION TO PERUVIANS TO STRIKE WITH THEIR SOVIET TANKS, AND TEMPTATION TO CHILEANS, IN DESPERATION, TO SEEK SOLUTIONS WE COULD NOT CONTROL FOR THEIR PROBLEMS. ADDITIONALLY, PROVIDING TOW MIGHT REDUCE (AT LEAST TO SOME DEGREE) CHILEAN PRESSURE FOR US TANKS, WHICH WE ARE FINDING IT VERY DIFFICULT TO MEET. MILGPC CONCURS.

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